



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

NEW YORK WOMAN SENTENCED TO 15 YEARS IN PRISON FOR HER ROLE IN FORCED LABOR AND ALIEN SMUGGLING SCHEME

NEW YORK -- MARILUZ ZAVALA was sentenced today to 15 years' imprisonment on her conviction for conspiring to obtain forced labor, conspiring to recruit, harbor, transport, and house undocumented workers, engaging in extortionate credit transactions, and transferring false alien registration cards. The sentence, announced by Roslynn R. Mauskopf, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, Martin D. Ficke, Special Agent-in-Charge, US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, New York (ICE) and Bradley J. Schlozman, Acting assistant Attorney General, Civil Rights Division, US Department of Justice, was imposed this morning by United States District Judge Sandra J. Feuerstein at the U.S. Courthouse in Central Islip, New York.

The defendant previously entered a guilty plea on November 5, 2004, as did her husband and co-defendant, JOSE IBANEZ. As part of the guilty plea, ZAVALA and IBANEZ forfeited a residence located at 3524 Great Neck Road, Amityville, New York, valued at \$220,000 and approximately \$30,000 in currency from operating accounts into which they deposited their victims' paychecks from which they made monthly mortgage payments on the houses the defendants used to harbor their victims.

At the time of the defendants' arrests on June 21, 2004, federal agents executed search warrants at three Long Island residences owned by the couple, located at 5 Felway Drive in Coram, 4 Fourth Avenue in Brentwood, and 3524 Great Neck Road in Amityville, and rescued 69 Peruvian nationals, including 13 children, who had been living in cramped, squalid conditions. The agents also seized a large quantity of phony identification documents, including Social Security cards, alien registration cards, and New York State drivers' licenses.

Between June 1, 1999 and June 21, 2004, ZAVALA and IBANEZ assisted the victims in fraudulently obtaining tourist visas by providing them with false documents and coaching the victims on how to lie to US Embassy officials. They charged the victims smuggling fees ranging from \$600 to \$13,000 per person.

The victims were forced to turn over their passports and almost all of their earnings to the defendants, who used the money to purchase vehicles and real property on Long Island and in Peru. In addition to the smuggling fees, the victims were required to pay the defendants for over-crowded and unsanitary living space

- frequently eight to ten persons per room with only one or two mattresses, and no more than two bathrooms for use by 30 or more individuals. The defendants also threatened to turn the victims over to law enforcement authorities if they refused to pay the defendants.

"The defendants victimized aliens who were desperate to enter the United States to build better lives for themselves and their families," stated United States Attorney Mauskopf. "We will use all available resources to protect the victims of trafficking and alien smuggling, and to prosecute those who would exploit them for personal profit and gain." Ms. Mauskopf thanked Catholic Charities for its extraordinary help in aiding the victims, and added that the Peruvian victims have been granted "continued presence" status in the United States, which eventually may enable them to obtain permanent legal status.

"Today's sentence exemplifies the seriousness of exploiting human being for financial gain," stated ICE Special Agent-in-Charge Ficke. "Human trafficking is akin to modern day slavery and identifying and dismantling trafficking rings is a key component of ICE's mission of protecting America and promoting the public safety of our communities."

Acting Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights Schlozman stated, "With no regard for human dignity, these traffickers exploited their victims' hopes and fears to force them into involuntary servitude. Today's sentencing sends a clear message to those who would attempt to profit at the expense of another's freedom."

IBANEZ's sentence has been scheduled for December 14, 2005.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.